Research Plan Proposal

Resistance, Politics and Literature in the select Novels of Nayantara Sahgal

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Research Problem

Indian National Movement was one of the biggest and popular mass movements in world history through which Indian people got formed into a nation. Hindu-Muslim relationships, education, the boycott of foreign cloth and liquor, the promotion of khadi and the struggle against social evils like untouchability formed subjects in the nationalist movement. Compulsory primary education, the lowering of the taxation on the poor and middle classes, the reduction of the salt tax were some of the major reforms demanded by Indian National Movement. It mobilized the youth, women and men of different castes and classes into political action and brought a mighty colonial empire to its end. The country struggled to free itself from the shackles of colonialism. National leaders like Dadabhai Naoroji, Surendra Nath Bannerji, Bal Ganghadar Tilak, Jawaharlal Nehru, Gopal Krishan Gokhale, Netaji Subhash Chandra Bose, Lala Lajpat Rai, and Mahatma Gandhi accepted that India was not fully structured nation and thus their objective was to promote the growing unity of the Indian people through a common struggle against colonialism. Thus the Indian National Movement was able to tap the diverse energies, talents and capacities of a large variety of people.

After Independence new political movements emerged due to conflicts between classes, castes and other units. Injustice and exploitations of women in the male dominated society continued, giving rise to new trends and conflicts. After Independence even in the democratic process sometimes state functionaries or power hungry leaders try to violate democratic norms or rights. Ethical and moral values have been replaced by money-values leading corruption on one side and providing opportunities to form new institutions with some sort of democratic human values for sustainability of the system itself. At the end of the British rule, India had a larger industrial sector, with a stronger element of indigenous enterprise, than most under developed countries in the world.

In an orthodox society like India, women have been made to believe that gender roles are natural. Education, employment and political rights were naturally constructed and they were confined to domestic duties. They were considered as the territory to be conquered and represented. Man has always looked down upon her as the weaker section, as his property, servile to him. Nayantara Sahgal has also depicted the social and cultural conflicts in her novel. Her novels portray the postcolonial consciousness with strong and proper perspectives in our times, by her close analysis and enormous sensitivity that set right the national honour and self-respect.

The feminine standpoint is very important in Sahgal's novels but there are some other issues which are equally important. Sahgal emphasizes on some important events of the Indian nationalist struggle led by Mahatma Gandhi. In her novels like *Rich Like Us, Mistaken Identity, Prison and Chocolate Cake, A Situation in New Delhi*, She focuses on some significant events like Satyagraha movement, Gandhi's salt march, Lahore conspiracy case, hunger strikes, Non-cooperation movement, Mass arrests. She has focused on peasant movements held in Kheda and Surat (Gujarat) where peasants refused to pay their taxes and went hijarat to neighbouring Baroda territory to escape government repression in her novel *Mistaken Identity*. In other parts of the country the mobilization of peasants around the demands for security of tenure, abolition of feudal levies, reduction of taxes and debt relief, made major headway. The Civil Disobedience Movement was launched in the atmosphere of discontent in 1930, and in many parts of the country it took the shape of no-tax and no-rent campaign. She also portrays the emergency period (1975-1977) declared by Indira Gandhi and political corruption in her novel *Rich Like Us***.**

Sahgal emphasizes on the hegemonic struggle between dominant and oppressed class of society. She is representing the way life is being lived, its important concerns and events. Sahgal's conscious awareness of the past as a sense of value and as history has influenced both her choice of genre and form. She points out the Emergency period which gave birth to a movement for civil liberties, and newspaper afterwards began to report their terrible abuses and violations in towns as well as rural areas. She has depicted the values and compromises by the people to get freedom and the political period when common people were trying to resist in that environment.

Nayantara Sahgal also distinguishes the two cultures- that of the oriental East and modern West and brings out the obvious conflicts in her novels. Her originality lies in the fact that underlying everything is her growing concern for human values. She has reflected her first hand knowledge of the transitional phase following the independence of India.

Sahgal emphasizes on *colonial period* which was the era from the 1550s to 1990s when several European powers (Spain, Portugal, France, the Netherlands, and Britain) established colonies in Asia, Africa, and the America. Europeans wants to control over the rest of the world. They considered native people as pagan, evil and primitive. The native people try to be like Europeans but they never able to become truly white or white enough to satisfy Europeans.

The chief questions I will investigate are: How common people were trying to resist during India's Independence Movement? How politics plays an important role in

literature? How women negotiate with various personal, social, religious and political issues. I will portray the exploitation, struggle and sufferings on women in male-dominated society. I will also examine the injustice done on the native people by the Europeans. I will examine the democratic setup and class struggles among human and ethical values. How Sahgal has depicted those women who have engaged in social complexities in search of identity, independence, fulfillment and love. A key future of my thesis is the analysis of the role played by different characters in different ways.

In this thesis, I plan to study the novels of Nayantara Sahgal. She was born and brought up in a family of freedom fighters, the famous Nehru dynasty which had politics in their blood. Her mother Vijaya Lakhsmi Pandit was India's first ambassador to U.N. Her uncle Jawaharlal Nehru was the first prime minister of India. Her cousin Indira Gandhi became country's first women prime minister. She is an important modern Indian writer in English. She is one of the first female Indo-Anglian writers to receive wide recognition. Her novels are the replicas of Indian society. The characters of her novels were the witnesses of the political upheavals of the political scenario. She explores the portrayal of Indian social world, the different periods in history where different forms of political and social exploitations have persisted and that various strategies of resistance evolved by the common people. My thesis will include her novels and essays. I will analyze her novels to know the political and cultural scenario and to know how common people lead their life during postcolonial period.

I hypothesize that Sahgal has a firsthand knowledge of politics and political figures in India, as she has spent most of her childhood in an atmosphere of intense nationalist spirit. Her family's close relations with the most important leaders threw her in the midst of the political movement. She has seen political conflict, leadership and activists of the top level. She says that common people were participating in the various movements for freedom. They do not accept the wrong things. Many people even sacrificed their lives, they got arrested, went to prison along with great leaders but authors didn't remember the name of these common people. Sahgal has highlighted these common people in her novels in the form of different characters. She has depicted the role of common people. Some people were highly educated but they were ready to compromise with their life. The people of working classes try to dominant the laboring classes. There was the hegemony among the upper and lower classes. Colonization had great effects on India and its people. Indian people though unified against colonialism and in the anti-imperialist struggle were at the same time divided into social classes which had their own contradictions with colonialism and with each other.

Indian people had shown courage and honesty to face the Britishers during India Independence Movement. How common man has shown resistance in the chaotic environment. Sahgal emphasizes that the reason why colonial state in India acquired a hegemonic character was that the British at home had a democratic government which had to justify the policies and behavior of its agents in India to the British people. Sahgal points out the source of political sense. She highlights the moral sense, ideology and social background of the common people through their characters in her novel. In *Rich Like Us*, Sonali the young female Indian civil servant struggles to find truth and logic in her ever-changing homeland, India. Like Sonali there were many women who had shown resistance to stay in patriarchal society. Her women rebel against such traditions which force them to suffer silently without redress. Instead her women walk out, substituting courage for self-sacrifice and redefine the notion of the virtuous women. Sahgal raises the question that how women has shown courage in participating in National movements equal to men.

Sahgal points out that the spirit which brought unity among the people of different castes and classes to fight for their rights was derived from different sources. These people forget their own issues and problems and got together to fight for the freedom of India. Thousands of people became the follower of Mahatma Gandhi and even went to prison with Gandhiji. But other than Gandhiji's impact, there are sources like religion and political or cultural ideas that govern their thinking.

In my research work I will be concerned with the making of hegemony among postcolonial countries like India. I will analyze the impact of colonial rule, the emergency of the national movement among Indian people and the formation of different kinds of ideas that disturbs the governing hegemony. I will also focus on the life of common people and how they were resisting in that scenario. I will analyze the continuity of the social structures and gender roles. I will also examine the courage shown by women and men in their participation in the National Movements. A key feature of my thesis is the analysis of the role played by different characters in the novels of Sahgal.

Definition of Terms

Hegemony: A term coined to investigate why the ruling class was so successful in promoting its own interests in society. Fundamentally, hegemony is the power of the ruling class to convince other classes that their interests are the interests of all. Domination is thus exerted not by force, nor even necessarily by active persuasion, but by a more subtle and inclusive power over the economy, and over state

apparatuses such as education and the media, by which the ruling class's interest is presented as the common interest and thus comes to be taken for granted.

Resistance: The refusal to accept or comply with something; the attempt to prevent something by action or argument. It means a process in which the ego opposes the conscious recall of anxiety-producing experiences. Political resistance relates to common people who were resisting under the control of Britishers. Women were trying to resist their suppression with the male dominated society.

Values: Values are the norms and myths acceptable to a society which govern and guide the thinking and behavior of the largest number of the people in that society.

Background

A major objective of the nationalist struggle was to arouse the activity of the people and to enhance their desire, capacity and will to struggle for the end of colonial state. The national movement from the beginning made efforts to weaken the hegemony of colonial ideology among the British people and public opinion.

I am interested in Nayantara Sahgal because she is one of the major writers who have represented historical events as a major theme in her novels. Her novels have reflected India's political life since Independence, from its high idealism to its present crisis of credibility. She was grown up in an environment when India was struggling for freedom. Her parents and her uncle Jawaharlal Nehru were actively engaged in freedom movements in India. Politics entered in her life very early. The visits of the police, the imprisonments of their parents, the hectic political activity followed by long periods of silence were accepted as ordinary events. Gandhian values have formed the basis of her approach to problems both political and personal. She emphasis on events like Jallianwala Bagh Massacre(1919), Rowlatt act (1919), Non-cooperation movement (1920), Khilafat movement (1920), Chauri-Chaura Incident (1922), Swaraj Party(1922), Kakori Conspiracy Case(1925), Simon Commission (1927), Dandi March(1930), Civil Disobedience Movement (1930-31), and Quit India Movement (1942) lead by Mahatma Gandhi.

Sahgal portrays the political disputes and conflicts during the colonial period. She also deals with the theme of the Indian National Movements. Her autobiographies, *From Fear Set Free* (1963) and *The Prison and the Chocolate Cake (*1954) are replete with her personal memories mixed up with the story of the Indian struggle for freedom. Her fictional works *A Time to be Happy* (1958) and *This Time of Morning* (1968) deal with the theme of the Indian Freedom Movement. In *A Time to be*

Happy, the British presence is felt through social structures, the British firms which act as employers, the contributions and loyalty Her novel *Storm in Chandigarh* (1969) has the story of the division of Punjab in to the modern states of Punjab and Haryana. *The Day in Shadow* (1971) deals with the post-independence political situation where there is a gradual deterioration in the political and moral values. Her novel *A Situation in New Delhi* (1977) deals with the political situation after the death of Jawaharlal Nehru. *Rich Like Us, Plans for Departure* and *Lesser Breeds* is an interesting postcolonial text. *Rich Like Us* (1985) is a complex and comprehensive account of the emergency and its impact on the contemporary society. Her novels *Plans for Departure* (1985) and *Mistaken Identity* (1988) continue with the political themes in the clear reflection of her unending passion for politics. *Lesser Breeds* (2003) juxtaposes the power of violence of the oppressive British government with the power of non-violence of the determined Indians.

I will analyze Sahgal's nonfiction *Jawaharlal Nehru: Civilizing a Savage World* (2010) which discusses the significant issue of independent India's foreign policy-characterized by the non-alignment principle and establishment of relations with the United States, Britain, the Soviet Union and China. *Indira Gandhi: Her Road to Power* (1982) is the depiction of Indira Gandhi's movement in relation to Indian politics. It focuses on the life of Indira Gandhi and her way to get the power and also return of power after a period of time.

Many scholars have discovered other meanings which I will explore. I will analyze the colonial and post-colonial situations in her novels like *Plans for Departure*, *Rich Like Us* and *Mistaken Identity*. I will focus on the origins of post-colonialism which have been located in the sixties when a search began in the erstwhile colonies for continuity and indigenous cultures. My focus will be on the major themes like human relationship, British Imperialism, the India National Movement and the emergency period. I will also discuss the epicenter of the novel *Mistaken Identity* which highlights the prison cell where men from different parts of the country, different religions and political beliefs are put together.

I will analyze Sahgal's novel *Lesser Breeds*, a postcolonial text which corroborates post colonialism in pre-Independence and post- Independence era by witnessing the developments from 1932 to 1968. I will also emphasize on the colourful narrations of ahimsa in India and will focus on the cultural differences between the Indian and the European culture.

Women characters deals with the themes of suffering, dominance, urge for companionship in Sahgal's novels. Sahgal novels like *Mistaken Identity, This Time of Morning, Rich Like Us, Storm in Chandigarh, Plans For Departure* shows various

states of women in a patriarchal society. I will focus on some women characters like Anna, Sonali, Rose, Simrit, Sylla, Renee who refuses to bow down before the strangle hold of men, right from the beginning. These women rise against dominant culture which impedes women's progress and rebel them to move out freely as an independent women.

I will explore the colonial consciousness which means acceptance of imperial model because these mental states are very relevant to many Sahgal's novel. Both are dependent and imbalanced relationships. Colonialism or colonial consciousness is in itself a term which needs to be defined. It is the comment upon the political situation and lack of commitment on part of human beings involved. Edward Said in Orientalism has stressed on the impact and formation of a colonial consciousness upon the colonized people and now became a hegemony that is more powerful than the physical force.

Arudhanti Chatterjee's *"*Different Facets of the Indian Women in Nayantara Sahgal and Ruth. P Jhabvala*"* explores the post-Independence period which saw the emergence of some powerful women novelists in Indian English Literature. In the novels of the Indian English women writers like Kamala Markandaya, Anita Desai, Nayantara Sahgal and R.P Jhabvala, I will expose the Indian women who have remained more chained to their circumstances than liberated, more tradition-bound than modern, more restricted and confined than liberated. Some have broken off from their shackles and has moved towards freedom.

Emergency period in India which continued from June 1975 to March 1977 gave all kinds of new twists and turns and bring chaos in the Indian political scene. It was most controversial periods of the political history of Independent India. Ssome individuals began acting as middle men between authorized and unauthorized source of power. I will focus on the emergency by Sahgal. How common people stood up and faced the challenges? How these common people were resisting in such controversial environment? Various forms of resistance need to be examined carefully. I will focus on the various articles which depicts the emergency period like "An Authentic Picture of the Emergency in Nayantara Sahgal's Rich Like Us." by M. Gayathiri. R. G. Hedge's article "Nayantara Sahgal's Rich Like Us: Political Novel as Postmodernist Non-Fiction". "Power Structure in Nayantara Sahgal's Rich Like Us." by Mini Nanda , "An Authentic Picture of the Emergency in Nayantara Sahgal's Rich Like Us."by M. Gayathiri.

I will begin my discussion by the impact of Gandhiji on Sahgal, She has herself acknowledged the portrayal of the suffering of common people during the emergency. Gandhi and Jawaharlal Nehru are the great leaders whose visions of a

New India not only had a great impact on making a new country but it has also influenced the mind of millions of Indians. Gandhian ideals, search for one's identity and communication between individuals are some of the prime concerns depicted in Sahgal's novels "Communication and Content in Gandhiji's Hind Swaraj" by K. Raghavendra Rao. It depicts the basic problems of Indian National Movement, Satyagraha movement, Hindu-Muslim relationship as adopted by Gandhiji. Similarly Sarojini Shintri's article "Glimpses of Nehru, the writer" discusses the concept of Indian Civilization during the time of Nehru. It also focuses on the continuity and discontinuity of values. Harin Majithia's article "Major Thematic concerns in the Novels of Nayantara Sahgal" depicts one of the major political events on the Indian sub-continent under the leadership of Mahatma Gandhi. Gandhi has derived inspiration from several sources but satyagraha was his historical idea to solve certain problems. "The Making of the Nation" by Meenakshi Mukherjee also focuses on Gandhian ideology and the historical movements lead by Gandhiji.

In a male dominated society, woman is viewed through a magnifying glass and watched by others if she does not follow the roles made by men. Inder-Saroj relationships in *Storm in Chandigarh*, Relationship between Mona and Ram in *Rich Like Us* and Simrit-Som relationships in *The Day in Shadow* exposes the cruel face of patriarchy where woman lives in an appalling condition and faces sufferings because of social conventions. But during that time there was some modern Indian women who made themselves free from the restrictions imposed by the society, culture, nature and also free from their own fears and guilt. These women make a bid to liberate themselves from male oppression and thus cherish the ideals of self-reliance and self-sufficiency. They search for definitions about the self and society. Through self-identity, they became independent like man. I will focus on various articles which explores the role of modern woman in Indian society like Ram Sharma's "Identity Crisis in the Novels of Nayantara Sahgal.", "Role of Society in the novels of Nayantara Sahgal." and Rajeswar Mittapalli's "Myth as Macro-structure: A Reading of Kamala Markandaya's A Silence of Desire and Nayantara Sahgal's The Day in Shadow."

Europeans considers themselves as a superior race and thus consider all other races to be uncivilized. They have the right to conquer and make use of non- European for their profit and pleasure. Europeans had divided up the globe into rulers and ruled, masters and slave. Trade routes opened up by these Europeans in India carried everything from silk and spices to human flesh westward. Concepts like modernization and development have been taken to mean what the west understands by them. Non-Europeans have to struggle and follow the rules and regulation set up by the west. All the essential power from financial to information

and armaments is largely controlled by the west. Nayantara Sahgal has raised these issues and how Indians suffered as colonized race. These issues have also been taken up by critics like M. Gayathiri, R.G Hedge, Meenakshi Mukherjee, Arundhati Chatterjee and Neena Arora in their articles. I will focus on the Europeans possessions and ownerships as discussed by Jasbir Jain in her article "Illusion and Reality."

The origins of Post-colonialism have been located in the sixties when the major reshuffling of authorities and boundaries took place and militant group emerged. Jasbir Jain's article "Interpreting the Past: Culture and History in Sahgal's Work" discusses the commonalty between post-modernism and post-colonialism. Jasbir Jain says, "The origins of post-modernism and post-colonialism lie in the same political shuffling which transforms the 'natives' into human beings and brought forth a fractured sense of identity, a pluralistic world and the aesthetics of uncertainty." Lesser Breeds corroborates post colonialism in pre-Independence era. I will focus on various articles related to post colonialism and colonialism like "Nayantara Sahgal's Lesser Breeds: A Postcolonial Text." by Shivputra Shivraj Kanade, Jasbir Jain's "Sahgal Political Journey: Stepping outside the Frame", and "Political Storm and Dispute in Nayantara Sahgal's Storm in Chandigarh." by Manjushree. R.

Among the full length book on Nayantara Sahgal, a writer like Jasbir Jain has written various articles. She talks about the narrative style, form and structure, themes and technique used by Sahgal in her novels. I will be choosing Jasbir Jain in order to approach her critical work for my analysis of political ideas, family issues, ideals and perspective, male narrative voice in women's writers, different religions, different social backgrounds and political beliefs, some historical issues like Dandi March, Satyagraha Movements, Lahore conspiracy case, the hangings, the clamping of the Emergency and many more as depicted by Jain in her articles, "Men in the Minds of Women: Women writers and Male narrators in the fiction of Nayantara Sahgal, Anita Desai and Githa Hariharan", "Decentring the Centre: Plans For Departure", "Goodbye to Realism: The 'Ending' of Mistaken Identity", "Blanking out the Mirror-Image: Rich Like Us", The Emergence of the New Woman", "Mythologising History: The Indo-British Experience".

Religion is a part of human life. It is used as a dominating form. I will explore the religion and religious attitude which Sahgal feels through political and emotional stances and personal relationships. 'Inder' in *Storm in Chandigarh* and '*Som' in The Day in Shadow* are the men who, not really religious, still derive their idea of male superiority from religious sources. I will point out the various forms of hegemony. How hegemony is constructed? How patriarchy is used as a part of hegemony?

Common woman has shown the courage to take part in political events equal to man. They rebel against the traditions which make them bound in domestic duties. Common people were resisting during the time when people of upper classes were trying to dominate the people of lower classes. There was hegemony between working and laboring classes.

The primary objective of my study will be in-depth analysis of the source of resistance. How common people were resisting during the rule of British rule. How these people were sacrificing their life for the freedom struggle in India? How hegemony has been created through the political issue? There was the hegemony from one class to another. People of lower classes accept the view that they are born to be made as slaves and they have to work under the people of upper classes. The study will examine various political, social and cultural issues during India Independent movement, Emergency and various historical events and the changes Sahgal has experienced since the past. This study of Sahgal's works can thus be seen as contributing a new dimension to the important historical events of the past.

Research Methods

My research methods will consist of analyzing and interpreting the primary sources. I will also use the biographical and historical materials to establish the political and cultural events which influenced the author. I will support my findings with a significant number of critical works on Nayantara Sahgal which deal with the subject of colonial period, political events, men- women relationship, illusion and reality. I will also examine the ideas in political and sociological context.

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Chapter Contents

1. Political conflicts in India
2. The colonial struggle, idea of Resistance
3. Living in a free world yet in conflict
4. Women's search for self respect, dignity
5. Narrative form and structure
6. Conclusion

In Chapter one, I will focus on the various political events and conflicts during India Independence Movement. I will portray the period of National Emergency as depicted by Nayantara Sahgal in her novel *Rich Like US.* Sahgal has focused on some historical events like Khilafat movement, Satyagraha movement, Non-Cooperation movement, Civil disobedience movements in her autobiography *Prison and Chocolate Cake*. My purpose will be to point out the core idea behind the National Movements in India.

In chapter two, I will focus on various struggles of colonial India as highlighted by Sahgal in her novels like *Mistaken Identity, Rich Like Us.* How common people were resisting during the rule of British rule. I will focus on the fact which made common people to participate in these movements? I will point out that how these common people were trying to resist during the colonial struggles. How these people were sacrificing their life for the freedom struggle in India? I will also point out the hegemony which has been created through the political issue.

In chapter three, I will focus on the various political crisis, situations, internal conflicts and social problems after Independence as depicted by Sahgal in some of her novels. I will analyze the fact that people got independence yet they were surrounded with various conflicts and problems as highlighted by Sahgal in some of her novels like *Storm in Chandigarh, Rich Iike Us and Plans for Departure, Lesser Breeds*. I will highlight the conflicts between the dominant and oppressed classes in society.

In chapter four, I will focus on gender roles. I will highlight the difference in the upbringing and socialization of women in male dominated society. Sahgal has depicted the patriarchal hegemony and marriage conflicts in her novels like *A Situation in New Delhi, Storm in Chandigarh, This Time of Morning and The Day in Shadow.* I will also focus on women's search for dignity, self respect, independence,

fulfillment and love. These women make a bid to liberate themselves from male oppression and thus cherish the ideals of self-reliance and self-sufficiency.

In chapter five, I will focus on the perspective, characterization, myth and form of the novels as used by Sahgal. I will also focus on the social background of the characters as depicted by Sahgal in her novels. I will point out the various forms of hegemony. How hegemony is constructed? How patriarchy is used as a part of hegemony? I will explore the religion and religious attitude which Sahgal feels through political and emotional stances and personal relationships.

Finding of the above study will be presented in the last chapter. This chapter will also focus on the political novels of Nayantara Sahgal. She highlights the moral sense, ideology and social background of the common people through their characters in her novel.